

**Our West
India Trade.**

Although future historians may condemn the action of the United States in entering upon a war to expel Spain from the West Indies, the commercial world of today engaged in trading with Cuba, Puerto Rico or any of the Spanish possessions will rejoice at any change of Government in the places named. The Maritime Provinces are peculiarly interested in the outcome of the present war, and must benefit by any disposition of the islands which delivers them from Spain. The once profitable trade between Nova Scotia and the Spanish West Indies in fish, sugar and molasses has been virtually destroyed by the corrupt administration of the islands by Spain. Honesty and fair dealing has been almost unknown, and foreign shippers have been the victims of differential tariffs, unjust taxation, forfeitures for imaginary violations of a corrupt customs, and the varying value of money.

The end of Spanish rule in Cuba and Puerto Rico, however brought about, ought to materially improve the trade of Canada with the West Indies.

**A Dangerous
Harbour.**

The sub-marine mines and torpedoes being used for the protection of New York Harbour, are already proving so great a source of annoyance and danger to shipping, and captains of coasting steamers and tugboats are displaying so much contempt for the hidden dangers of the mines that a patrol fleet of steam yachts and tugs will have to be employed to protect the forbidden channels. What with the chance of meeting with drifting explosives of force sufficient to send an ironclad skyward, added to the possibility of being fired at by one of the armed patrol boats should the new harbour regulations be even innocently disregarded, New York can hardly be considered a safe and desirable harbour for foreign shipping in time of war.

In the perfecting of the Revenue bill it seems to be more than likely that the proposed tonnage tax on foreign shipping will be dropped from fear that its imposition might divert trade from New York to Canada. But submarine mines cut drift by reckless tugboatmen, and torpedoes floating round looking for deadly work, will prove more powerful than a tonnage tax in forcing foreign shipments via the Canadian route and in causing a deviation of freight from the western country to Montreal, Halifax and other safe and peaceful harbours.

**Federal War
Insurance.**

On the 5th inst. a bill was introduced at Washington by Representative McCall to make the United States insure its merchant marine in time of war against the depredations of public enemies, and a special despatch to the *Evening Post* contains the following comments upon and quotations from the bill, which is stated to be worthy of more than passing attention:—

"The damages, direct and indirect, inflicted upon

commerce by the existence of a state of war, are so great that the expense of free insurance on the part of the government would be very small by comparison with the saving to our traders. The outbreak of war, by raising the rates of insurance, drives commerce into neutral bottoms, and the experience of the civil war proved that our lost commerce was with great difficulty regained. Our merchantmen would not be allowed to go into the enemy's waters, or to subject themselves to extra risks, and the President would be empowered to declare by proclamation certain waters as so dangerous that the United States desired to be released from its assumption of liability. 'The sum paid by Great Britain,' Mr. McCall says, 'for connivance with the Confederates in destroying our commerce (about \$15,000,000), shows how small would be the actual cost to the government of such an indemnity as I propose, and Charles Sumner's old speech will be revived, in which he sets forth the tremendous loss to our commerce which the liability to capture involves.'

The judiciary committee were to have given a hearing on the bill this morning, but, owing to the illness of John C. Coombs, a prominent Boston lawyer, who desired to appear in support of the proposition, the hearing was postponed."

Mr. McCall's bill also aims to repeal certain features of the present prize code, one of which is that the prize crews are allowed \$100 a head for every enemy who is sunk, and, if it is not practicable to learn how many suffer such a fate, the ship is assumed to have its full complement."

Stage Mechanism and New Theatres. In view of the proposed building of a new theatre in Montreal, we venture to suggest to the promoters of the Company having the matter in hand the adoption of a strong recommendation made at a meeting in England of the Society of Arts. It would appear that the terrible loss of life from fires which have originated "behind the footlights" has drawn public attention to the possibility of improving the construction of theatres, and especially the stage mechanism thereof. It is proposed by those conducting the agitation upon this matter in Great Britain that the introduction of modern methods and modern Science in all new theatres shall be compulsory. The iron stage worked by hydraulics or electricity with the fire-resisting curtain (the latter now in use in London) is to replace the wood stage, and thus largely reduce the risk of fire.

Actors and audiences are equally interested in this excellent proposal to remove a source of danger to both, and possibly the recollections of the enormous loss of life at theatre fires may induce our City Council to introduce a little legislation enabling them to control the construction of any new theatre or other place of amusement in Montreal.